
October 1982, Number 77



*The Delius Society
Journal*

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October 1982, Number 77

The Delius Society

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CONTENTS

Editorial
Rapsodie Floridienne by Christopher Palmer
A Visit to Solana Grove by Roger Buckley
Beecham Remembered
<i>Eine Messe des Lebens</i> in Lucerne by R S Kirkman
Forthcoming Events
	3	23
	6	22
	15	20

Acknowledgements

The cover illustration is an early sketch of Delius by Edvard Munch reproduced by kind permission of the Curator of the Munch Museum, Oslo.

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EDITORIAL

The highlights of the summer months have undoubtedly been Dr Fenby conducting *Appalachia* at the Royal Festival Hall and the memorable Yorkshire TV documentary 'Song of Farewell' directed and produced by Nick Gray. The RFH concert on July 11th was a prelude to the LSO's trip to America where seventeen days later at Daytona Beach, Florida, Dr Fenby repeated his half-share of the programme that also included *The Walk to the Paradise Garden*. The warmth of the London applause that greeted him surely signalled the recognition that is his due, and the critics were no less warm. Let these four extracts speak for themselves:

The reading seemed to grow in stature, unaffected and free from sentimentality. (Andrew Keener, *The Guardian* 12.7.82)

It was poignant to a degree to hear him shaping 'The Walk to the Paradise Garden' and 'Appalachia' with such sensitivity and commitment to the composer's unique compositional technique and work of feeling. (Anthony Payne, *The Daily Telegraph* 12.7.82)

. . . a very beautiful account of *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* – refined of colour and phrase, every instrumental strand carefully weighted, drawn out with uncommon ease and eloquence. (Dominic Gill, *Financial Times* 13.7.82)

Both works unfolded at seemingly ideal tempi from which the profusion of melody and melting harmony emanated naturally, and to moving effect . . . At seventy-five, more than half a century after serving as Delius's amanuensis, he must now be recognised as the guardian of a tradition. (Felix Aprahamian, *The Sunday Times* 18.7.82)

The hour-long TV documentary shown on August 1st was a visual feast in which Eric Fenby recounted the story of his association with Delius that, however familiar, one never tires of hearing again. Of particular interest was the significance he attached to his birth town of Scarborough, especially the place on the cliffs where as a young boy he used to sit reading scores, 'one of the most important places in my life . . . it is really a very emotional thing for me to come back . . .' As a boy gifted with perfect pitch, he was soon able to detect the sounds of nature and even the overtones, once astonishing his father (2nd tenor in a widely-known male voice quartet) by saying that it was thundering in E flat! Dr Fenby paid a noble tribute to the conductor of the Spa orchestra, Alick Maclean ('the one conductor who approached Beecham in Mozart – a superb conductor, aloof, aristocratic, with a marvellous sense of occasion') who allowed Fenby to conduct some of his early works. The programme opened with a sequence filmed at the launching of 'The Fenby Legacy' and also included some moments from the recording sessions. The film's success as a whole may be judged from the fact that it seems to have delighted alike the critics, the confirmed Delians, and those who know scarcely a note of his music and who just happened to be tuned into the programme.

In September the visit of the Philadelphia Orchestra to the Proms made it possible to renew acquaintance with those of its players who are also Delius Society members, and we were delighted to welcome Charles Griffin, Bill and Debbie Smith, and Davyd Booth, Philadelphia Branch vice-chairman and a

frequent performer for them. Two notable events in the Philadelphia Branch season have been the Delius birthday concert in January which included the *Romance* and the Cello Sonata, and the May concert that followed the AGM consisting of Delius's String Quartet, Howells's Piano Quartet, and the world première of Sorabji's flute quintet *Il Tessuto d'Arabeschi* dedicated to the memory of Delius. Davyd Booth performed in both concerts and Bill Smith conducted the notoriously difficult Sorabji piece, his wife being the flautist.

It is with much sadness that we have to report the death on September 7th of Ruth Parr of Willingboro, New Jersey. Estelle Palmley has written: 'From 1977, Bill Parr and his wife Ruth timed their annual visits to these shores to coincide with the Annual General Meeting, and many members will remember particularly meeting them at the AGM in Leeds in 1980. We offer Bill our heartfelt sympathy'. With regret we also record the death on September 4th on his 78th birthday of Sir Adrian Beecham, the elder son of Sir Thomas and Utica, Lady Beecham. It was a signal honour to have him as our guest at the recent AGM in London and we extend our sympathies to his family. Members may also have read of the death a month earlier of CatWeen Nesbitt at the age of 93. A close friend of the poet Rupert Brooke, she took the role of Yasmin in the 1923 production of *Hassan*, Delius attending the first night.



Delius Society dinner on June 12th before the *Beecham Symposium* chaired by Lyndon Jenkins (facing centre). With him are (clockwise) Sir Adrian and Lady Beecham, Shirley Lady Beecham, Robert Maycock (Editor, *Classical Music*), Arthur Ridgewell and Mrs Anne Gardiner.

With new recordings of the Cello Concerto and the Piano Concerto on the way, the Delius concertos have recently been receiving much attention. Our member Dick Packer, who has been doing some excellent promotion on the Society's behalf in the *Bristol Polytechnic News*, writes of a most impressive and 'thoroughly competent performance' of the Cello Concerto given in July at Bristol by the Bedfordshire County Youth Orchestra with the equally youthful Joanne Cole as soloist, Michael Rose conducting. Three days later the same orchestra performed the work at Bedford, the soloist on that occasion being Robert Cohen (who, with his father Raymond, took part in a broadcast last March of the Double Concerto, Norman Del Mar conducting the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra). Gordon Lovgreen reports that the RLPO under Sir Charles Groves gave *Brigg Fair* and the much less frequently heard *Florida* suite on June 26th. In May Barry Iliffe broadcast his fascinating investigation into the literary background of *Eventyr* about which he has twice spoken to the Society (reported in Journal 73). Issue number 50 of *Le Grand Baton*, published by the Sir Thomas Beecham Society in America, contained an article and thorough discography of Alfred Hertz, the conductor of the 1899 all-Delius London concert (though the article erroneously suggests that Hertz gave more than one such concert).

• • •

Expected by the end of the year from Thames Publishing is an album of four Delius works arranged for piano solo: *A Song before Sunrise* and *Late Swallows* arranged by Eric Fenby, and *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring* and *In a Summer Garden* in arrangements by Philip Heseltine, all for the very reasonable price of about £5.

• • •

The Editor claims no responsibility for the incorrect timing announced in the last issue for the TV documentary. He has however been guilty of nodding and apologies are offered to Ronald Kirkman for the unnecessary repetition of two lines in the printing of his letter in the same issue. But that is not quite so serious a failing as what must be the BBC's 'gaffe of the year' when, in a recent attribution of a broadcast arrangement of the National Anthem, they announced the premature death of Gordon Jacob — still very much alive at 87!

With a view to the 50th anniversary in 1984 of Delius's death (likewise of Elgar, Holst and O'Neill), the Society is actively promoting his music by sending lists of Delius's works involving orchestral forces to conductors, concert promoters and festival organisers in the hope of encouraging representative performances that year. There has already been some favourable response to the initial batch of 120 circulars sent out, and if members know of any persons or organisation within their locality that should receive our circular they are invited to send in the relevant addresses for action to be taken.



RAPSODIE FLORIDIENNE *

A TRAVEL DIARY, 23 – 30 JULY 1982

by Christopher Palmer

Friday 23rd

The Heathrow-bound car which collects me shortly before 8 a.m. already contains Dr and Mrs Fenby. Our destination is Daytona Beach, Florida, where on Wednesday 28th (the date of the Press showing in London of Nick Gray's *Song of Farewell*, as luck would have it) Eric Fenby is to conduct the London Symphony Orchestra in *The Walk to the Paradise Garden* and *Appalachia* – the same programme, in fact, with which he made his conspicuously successful Festival Hall debut a few weeks previously. Beforehand we are spending a few days in Jacksonville to which the Fenbys have been frequent visitors since 1966; I shall be seeing it for the first time.

Once comfortably settled in our seats on the plane I wonder aloud how Delius may have fared making the journey to Florida by sea nearly a hundred years ago aboard the 'Gallia'; EF says that according to D it was all very comfortable (no doubt even at this early stage D had acquired the knack of getting himself danced constant attendance upon). D, EF tells me, was always much more inclined to talk about his Florida years than any other period of his life; some indications, perhaps, of how much they meant to him. One story I'd never heard or read before: D was once out in the woods near Solano Grove and was menaced by a rattlesnake. He killed it with the one and only shot remaining in his rifle – and was horrified to see another snake making straight for him, clearly the mate of the one he'd slain. He fled, and was pursued by the grief-maddened snake right up to the verandah of his house, where fortunately there stood another rifle. D was very shaken by the incident.

We break the journey at Miami, where in the airport coffee-shop we enjoy the most heavenly apple-pie – or maybe *anything* would have tasted good after the wretched food on the plane. The flight from Miami to Jacksonville takes about an hour, and when we arrive we're met by Bob Sandlin, president of the Delius Association of Florida, whose caustic and ready wit is to be a constant source of amusement to us, as is his good-humoured but no-nonsense approach to his Delian responsibilities ('delighted to see you at our next meeting, Madam; be sure you bring your cheque-book with you!'). The arrangements he has made for our comfort and entertainment throughout our stay in Jacksonville go far above and beyond the call of his duties; the first evidence we find of this is the magnificent bowl of fresh fruit awaiting each of us in our rooms at the hotel, a welcoming present from Bob and Caryl McLear. By the time we're ready for Bob to take us out to dinner I'm feeling quite 'done up' (as D described Beecham on

* The subtitle of the second movement ('La Quadroone') of an unpublished *Suite d'Orchestre* by Delius dating from 1889–90.

a walking-tour in Norway) and begin to revive only after two or three cups of strong coffee. So I'm naturally exasperated, not to say ashamed, to find both EF and Rowena showing no signs of wear and tear whatsoever! However I forgive them, for they're ideal travelling companions; at their North-of-England hardiness and irrepressible sense of fun the merest hint of an approaching crisis turns tail and flees — and let no man forget that on occasions like these we all live in mortal terror of what Rowena calls the 'Delius Jinx'.

Saturday 24th

When yesterday in Bob's car EF excitedly pointed to the first approaches of the panoramic, cinemascopic, nay, *cineramic* St Johns River, it immediately took its place in my own private collection of wonders of the world. To our delight our hotel, the Sheraton, has turned out to be situated on the river itself (the address is 'St Johns Place').

As for the much-maligned midsummer heat, all the interiors are so well air-conditioned (although Florideans have still not solved the problem of how to keep parked cars cool) that the heavy warmth strikes me as more sensuous and seductive than actively disagreeable; certainly the humidity is less oppressive than London's, to my mind at least. Other features which immediately impress me are the lushness and luxuriance of the vegetation, the whiteness of the light, and what D would have termed the 'Hallelujah Chorus' of the crickets. It's so easy to see how to D, after the grime and grimness of Victorian Bradford, this place must have seemed a veritable Garden of Eden. No wonder it was life and quickening spirit, both to his sense and his emotions.

American hospitality is of course proverbial, and one day begins to merge into another in what seems like an unbroken flow of breakfast, luncheon, cocktail-party and dinner invitations. Today at lunch at the Yacht Club (most entertaining in Jacksonville is done either in clubs or at home) I have the pleasure of meeting for the first time people with whose names I've long been familiar, notably Jeanne Donahoo and Inez Perry; while EF and Rowena are clearly overjoyed to see there, unexpectedly and for a brief moment, Mrs Mary Rogers, one of the subscribers to the original Charter of the Delius Association of Florida.

Everywhere there is the clearest evidence of the immense esteem and affection in which EF and Rowena are held by all the Florida Delians; they certainly occupy a very special place in their hearts. On the way back we visit the Cummer Gallery of Art where I see the Henry Clews mask of D and Winslow Homer's lovely *White Rowboat, St Johns River*, partially reproduced (in black and white) on p.11 of *Delius: A Life in Pictures*. Curiously, however, my main recollection is aural rather than visual: the music of water ringing from a fountain set in a small Roman-style courtyard, with the peerless blue of a Southern summer afternoon's sky overhead.

En route for dinner that evening we stop for cocktails *chez* Frank and Evelyn Harris, who still live in the same house they built as a young married couple in the 1930s. I meet two of Florida's keenest Delians, Jeff Driggers of the Haydon Burns Public Library, and Bill Early, who show me their splendid collection of photographs taken on a previous visit to Solano Grove with Lionel Carley.

Dinner is at the river front home of two young friends of Bob's, Carl and Cynthia Powell. We sit and eat out on the dock watching a spectacular sunset over the water - the very sight D must have seen night after night at Solano Grove. Roll on tomorrow!

Sunday 25th

Today we are to visit Solano Grove, for me one of the principal *raisons d'être* of the whole trip. Before that we have lunch at the Surf Club, generously hosted by Inez Perry and her family.

We set off for Solano Grove at about 4 p.m. hoping to avoid the tropical downpours that tend to be an almost daily occurrence in Florida at this time of the year (eventually one catches up with us, but only on the way back). Jeff Driggers drives and the six of us - Jeff, Bill, Bob, EF, Rowena and myself - all fit very comfortably into the one car. EF, who has been to Solano Grove several times before, has talked about staying behind to rest, but in the event doesn't need much persuading to change his mind; he has providently equipped himself with a white sunhat and a prospector's staff.

After about an hour's drive south of Jacksonville we see the vast expanse of the river gleaming and glittering through the trees to our right, and shortly after we pull up by the side of the road in front of a sign (erected by Jacksonville University) pointing the way to the site of the house where 'Frederick Delius, Composer' lived from 1884 to 1885. This is not the end of the journey, however; the river bank is accessible only along a bumpy, waterlogged cart-track, and there to meet us and take us along this last lap by jeep and truck is Mrs Vera



Just inside the gate of Solana Grove, looking in the direction of the river.

(Photo: Roger Buckley)

McFarland – wiry, diminutive, as brown as a berry and a woman of great intellectual acumen as well as physical stamina. She has been showing visitors over Solano Grove for a good many years now, one of them J.B. Priestley, who described her in *Trumpets over the Sea* as 'perhaps my favourite Floridean'. I ask about the citrus trees and she explains that those few that survive are now cultivated only for domestic purposes, pine-resin being the main concern of those who live and work hereabouts. We've just missed the fruit-bearing season, but Mrs McFarland does manage to find me some ripe kumquats, a tropical citrus fruit so bitter-sweet (accent on the 'bitter') to the taste that they literally make the mouth water (EF recalls that D even at the end of his life reckoned himself a connoisseur of oranges, their feel and taste). Later she gives me a magnolia husk which I hope will prove a more durable memento.

We arrive at the river-bank, at the site of D's house itself, just in time to see in sun, sky and water an almighty blaze of incandescence, a sight I shall never forget. A minute later and the sun is engulfed by a thick bank of minatory clouds, and that's the last we'll see of it today. But for me the half-light only increases the sense of mystery and deep peace in which the whole of Solano Grove seems permanently sunk, a Delian 'moment of illumination' transfixed in time. Out on the dock I'm treated to what even for the residents is a comparatively rare spectacle – an alligator surfacing and snapping its jaws. (On the way back EF relates an amusing incident which took place at the reception given by the Harrison sisters after D's interment at Limpsfield. The Harrisons kept pet crocodiles in an open tank in their drawing room – though guests didn't necessarily know anything about them since for much of the time they kept out of sight at the bottom of the water. On this occasion, however, one of them suddenly surfaced and snapped its jaws noisily at Beecham – who, terrified out of his wits, beat an indecently hasty retreat). I've always been conscious of the crickets, but here the sound assumes symphonic, not to say stereophonic, proportions; it seems indeed to come from every direction, a marvellous contrapuntal complex endlessly varied in rhythm and dynamic. I hear also the frogs which croak in bassoon thirds in *The Magic Fountain*, *Koanga* and *Appalachia*, but we're too soon for the whippoorwill – this, Mrs McFarland informs us, sings generally in the early evening. The singer in *Appalachia*, you'll remember, will 'be gone before the whippoorwill's a-calling', i.e. before sunset on the following day, EF is wonderstruck above all at what he calls 'a cathedral of oaks', gigantic, awe-inspiring, hundreds of years old. Looking up and watching the light percolating through the branches and the dense curtain of Spanish moss that's everywhere in evidence, one can see what he means: great vaulted roofs, Norman arches, triforia, naves and chancels, even rose-windows – all readily suggest themselves to the imagination. EF wanders about in a trance and I sense he'd probably be quite glad to be rid of the whole gaggle of us – for after all, as he's written somewhere, that which mattered most in his life began here. Yes indeed, and how I wish I could conjure up at least something of the unique atmosphere of Solano Grove! But it needs an Arthur Machen or Henry Williamson to distil in mere words the essence of such a place as this. Helplessly, frustratedly, I can only urge everyone who has it in his power to do so to visit Solano Grove, for this was the beginning – and, in a sense, the end – of Delius, no question. Here,



Eric and Rowena Fenby at Solano Grove.

(Photo: Bill Early)

still after nearly a hundred years relatively untainted by human encroachment, you will see the 'mighty river' (so mighty that the opposite bank lies somewhere beyond the horizon), breathe the air of the 'scented woods', hear the 'swelling echo'. The tranquillity is almost tangible, a living presence, just like - yet how different from! - the countryside round Grez. To go to Solano Grove is to have one's appreciation - not merely of D's American works but of his entire *oeuvre*, the phenomenon, the experience, of Delius - immeasurably deepened and enhanced, as mine has been this day.

Monday 26th

EF does an interview in the morning with Ann Hyman of the *Florida Times-Union*. I spend most of the day at Jacksonville University, where Bob introduces me to the much-lauded and much-loved President Frances B. Kinne and to Tom Gunn, director of the Swisher Library which houses an impressive collection of Deliana. I look at the notebook containing evidence of D's harmony and counterpoint studies with Thomas Ward; at the collected works of Byron presented by Ward to D (with its pressed flowers); and at the manuscript full score of *Koanga* (at this stage of his career D's calligraphy still *looked* as good as the music [or much of it] already *sounded*.) I look over the Delius House, beautifully restored and maintained even if it did lose its upper storey and kitchen annex in the process. According to William Randel ('Delius in America', reprinted in *A Delius Companion*, pp.147-66) the piano which Ward helped D to buy and which made the parlous journey to Solano Grove, is one of the two now on view in the restored house, having been located in Daytona Beach as

recently as 1961. Professor Randel refers one to an article in the *All Florida and TV Magazine* (4 November 1962, p.3) in support of this, but when Tom Gunn looks up the issue in question we can find no such article. Some interested party might care to pursue this matter; Jeff Driggers for one is inclined to believe that D's ownership of this piano cannot be authenticated.

In the evening EF takes an *Appalachia* rehearsal with the Solano Singers, a select group of sixty voices specially formed for the occasion and superbly put through their paces by Brenda McNeiland, whose husband William, a bass-player, is a professor of music at Jacksonville University and conducts the University Orchestra (tonight, like Bob Sandlin, he's singing in the choir). EF, predictably, spends most of his time on the unaccompanied choral variation – asks again and again for a true *pianissimo*, which is magical when it finally happens. How fascinating it is to watch him rehearse – asking for a little more weight on the 'operative note' in a chord – 'not too much *crescendo-diminuendo*, save it for later'; 'remember the effect of *distance* is all-important'. It's a good sound, and the smaller number of singers (as opposed to the 300-strong London Symphony Chorus) if anything makes for a greater homogeneity of texture, at least in this unaccompanied variation. After working a little on the 'doxologies' and running once through the apotheosis (how I admire his gradual, controlled gathering of momentum here – as a result not only does the dawn break more realistically, but D's dexterously-contrived consummatory complex of motifs and variants is allowed to make its [counter–] point firmly and audibly), EF pronounces himself very satisfied and dismisses everyone. Lovely, sensitive Evelyn Harris who has listened to the rehearsal with me is so overwhelmed by what she's heard that she says it's as well she can't come to the performance on Wednesday.

Back at the hotel Bob Sandlin tunes our radios in so that we can hear an hour-long programme of Los Angelean origin exclusively devoted to *The Fenby Legacy* recording. The speaker unequivocally declares EF to be the finest Delius interpreter since Beecham (hear, hear!). EF for his part is much affected yet again by Rolfe-Johnson's *Late Lark*, and I must say it's difficult to imagine this performance ever being improved upon. And so, contentedly, to bed.

Tuesday 27th

Daytona Day. EF and Rowena leave in the morning with Bob and Caryl; I go after lunch with Bill and Brenda McNeiland. The basic physiognomy of Daytona looks something like that of Margate or Clacton, but is redeemed by the usual high American standards of food and facilities, and, of course, by the epic scale of things. America does *everything* in the grand manner. Immediately on entering our motel I recognize familiar faces, for this is one of three commandeered by the LSO for the duration of their stay. After a fine fish dinner at an adjoining Holiday Inn EF and I spent some time correcting sundry mistakes that have come to light in the *Appalachia* orchestral parts. We award first prize to a cor anglais solo (five bars before letter Dd) marked thus:



Well! One wonders how many hapless players have scratched their heads over *that* one and tried (inevitably unsuccessfully) to make sense of it. Of course the *ppp* has crept in from the stave immediately below; it properly belongs to the first clarinet which is holding part of the supporting chord.

Wednesday 28th

Thoughtful Sue Mallett, the LSO's administrator, has booked us all into rooms with an ocean view, and I'm woken at 7 by such a brilliance of sun over water as I've never seen before. The beach is deserted (and at this early hour, I imagine, the atmosphere should be blissfully clear of exhaust fumes — surely cars should never be permitted on the beach itself) so I go down for a quick dip. The water is already luke-warm, and by 7.30 the sun is so hot that it would be foolish to stay out longer unprotected (being very fair-skinned I'm particularly susceptible). At 9.45 we drive to the Peabody Auditorium for the dress rehearsal which goes smoothly enough; it is this, rather than the actual performance, which provides me with my greatest purely musical thrill of the trip. For although the chorus is 95% white (not all-black, as early on we'd hoped it might be), they *are* American, and of the South, of Florida itself; and something in the inflections, the timbre, the colour, the *quality* of the vocal sound they produce — perhaps also a more natural feel for the 'swinging' of a rhythmic phrase — brings that massed response to the baritone soloist's 'Oh Honey I am going down the river in the morning' electrifyingly to life ('Heigh ho, Heigh ho, down the mighty river'). Surely this approached more closely perhaps than ever before to the style of singing D himself heard and had in mind. And what a wonderful effect it is when the women's voices enter in assent: 'Aye, Honey, I'll be gone when next the whippoorwill's a-calling'! I'm quite bemused by this moment for most of the day, and fear I must have seemed rather uncommunicative at lunch (our gracious hosts on this occasion were Henry and Peggy Cornely, he first 'cellist of the Jacksonville Symphony, she a past president of the Association). However I do prick up my ears when I hear EF describing D's reluctance to accept the C.H. Apparently EF and Alden Brooks were dispatched to look up the relevant literature and find out who the previous recipients of the honour had been. The first name they read out to D was that of General William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army — whereupon they were peremptorily silenced.

At the performance itself that evening the *Paradise Garden* goes well; I'm now getting used to D's *original* orchestration as opposed to Beecham's reduced version which actually adds double-basses at the big climax towards the end (presumably to compensate for the deleted contra fagotto); and of course the ear has grown accustomed to hearing them there. (A whole chapter could be written — perhaps has been written by EF in his forthcoming OUP study — on D's unorthodox use — or rather non-use — of the double-basses.) *Appalachia* fares on the whole less well. The hall is really quite unsuitable for a work of this scope. There's barely room on the platform to accommodate the large orchestra, let alone the chorus; the latter, instead of being grouped *en masse* are forced most unsatisfactorily to spread themselves out in a straight line. There's no raking, which means that it's difficult (to put it mildly) for everyone to get a clear view of EF. A near-capacity audience has soaked up what little reverbera-

tion there was, and the sound is so dry and taut and brittle you could cut it with a knife — the precise reverse of a sympathetic Delian acoustic. The orchestra is tired after a long and gruelling tour, and *Appalachia* is a work which demands maximum concentration on the part of all its participants, not least the audience; the latter is polite but restless and clearly doesn't know the music, nor what to make of it — they start applauding between the breaks in the variations (imagine D's reaction!). For all that there are many fine moments — particularly the opening, beautifully poised, breathing yet motionless in a way that only a conductor properly attuned to Delius can achieve. And the orchestral variation after the unaccompanied chorus is, as I now realize, pure Solano Grove (Priestley in *Trumpets over the Sea*: '... it could be argued that at least a suggestion of melancholy-exotic-Florida-brooding remained in [Delius's] music to the end . . . his orange grove has vanished. But the river still flows through the dusk in his music.').

After the concert the whole of Daytona is a-riot with parties, for this is the LSO's last night. We're very lucky in the one we're invited to — it's hosted by a genial gentleman who I learn afterwards is a distinguished dentist and who talks to me about Gershwin, *Porgy and Bess* and the *Florida Suite* as if he knows it's one of my hobby-horses (perhaps he does). There's an abundance of excellent food and drink, but just as I'm getting involved in earnest musico-intellectual conversation with an uncommonly pretty flautist of the locality I spot EF frantically making me the pre-arranged signal that he's tired and is ready to leave. Now the young D in Danville would doubtless have known exactly how to handle such a situation; I do not and bow to the inevitable.

Thursday 29th

We are to travel with the orchestra as far as Miami and spend a night there while they straightway board a plane for London. (We are glad of the respite). I nearly miss the bus buying mounds of club sandwiches (why do the Americans do this sort of thing so much better — i.e., more generously — than we do?) for the journey — quite needlessly, as it turns out, for we stop en route at a place that is high-grade coffee shop and general stores rolled into one. I never thought I'd admit to enjoying a coach-trip, but if all Greyhound Buses are like this one I'll never again need to worry about road travel in America. We take a taxi from the airport across the causeway to Miami Beach, which looks somewhat scruffy and down-at-heel, not to say tacky. However the ready (and inexpensive) availability of fresh citrus juices and delicious fruit salad, and the beautiful pale-green of the sea, are powerful compensatory factors. It's off-season at the moment, of course, and our hotel is practically empty. Again our rooms have an ocean view, and because the beach is relatively narrow one's balconies appear to jut right out over the water itself. We're delighted. We dine alone in the hotel restaurant — oh, the blessings of silence and solitude! — and sit up talking till late in the well-lit palatial lounge. I then sit out on my balcony till 2 a.m. with the sea thundering and crashing and the wonderful hot Southern night wind blowing in at what seems gale force. I start reading the Delius chapter in Gloria Jahoda's *The Other Florida* which dear Jeanne Donahoo gave me as a memento of my first visit to Jacksonville. No one could dispute the author's ability to tell a good

story, even if one's never quite sure (is she, one wonders?) whether it's fact or fiction. I'm riveted by her quest for Julia Sanks, sister-in-law of Elbert Anderson who 'did' for D, and sole survivor of those who'd known him on Solano Grove. She finds her in the end, nearly 100 and living in a three-roomed hovel and very conscious that her time is nearly up. She makes her visitor pray with her for D's soul, 'because he such an unbeliever'.

Then it strikes me - the key of the *Appalachia* apotheosis, the song of dawn breaking, the radiant morn approaching, of loved ones 'ever waiting', is also the F major of 'O Will Unbending' in the *Mass of Life*. ('preserve me for one great worthy final destiny') and conclusively, decisively, irrefutably, that of 'Joy shipmate Joy' in the *Songs of Farewell*. What the dying hear is joy, cried old Julia Sanks (maybe); and what we living hear, when listening to the music of Delius is joy as well.

Postscript: London, Saturday 31st, 10 a.m.

We're back safe and sound and already looking forward to the transmission of *Song of Farewell* tomorrow night. It's been a perfect trip, perhaps the most memorable of my life, but who can measure such an experience in practical terms? And only one major disappointment - that 'heavenly' apple-pie we enjoyed so much in the Miami Airport Coffee Shop was 'off' when we passed through on our return.



The view north from the bank of Solana Grove. To the right is a fallen live oak.
(Photo: Roger Buckley)

A VISIT TO SOLANA GROVE

by Roger Buckley

Solana Grove

Early one Sunday morning at the beginning of May last year I stood in Solana Grove. The heat of the sun, flung down like a challenge to the intruder, was periodically moderated by small high clouds, and a fitful breeze stirred the moss-festooned branches of the oaks and pines. In the branches grey squirrels darted about and unseen exotic birds called. Over the rough clearing huge butterflies floated and flying beetles zoomed. Almost underfoot, lizards basked warily. Larger creatures, dark serpentine shapes at the corner of the eye, slipped into deeper cover in the dense shade of the trees. The cicadas chirped ceaselessly.

From the site of the pleasant wooden house which once stood in the grove, the St. Johns river, shallow and four miles wide at this point, was hidden by the vegetation on the low bank. There were a few aged palm trees to the left, and to the right, almost covered by creeping vines, were the crumbling remains of the massive live oak whose far-flung shade many must have enjoyed until Hurricane Dora toppled it in 1964. Determination was needed to reach the river through the tangled aromatic scrub which filled the grove, and care, when stepping on fallen branches which looked solid but were rotten to the heart.

The river lapped gently at the eroded bank over a yellow sandy bed. Trees grew up to the edge of the bank and even in the water; there were oak, palm, acacia and pecan. The wooded opposite bank formed a thin line in the distance.

Sitting astride a branch overhanging the water I continued to orientate myself. South, to my left (and upstream, though no flow was discernible) was another plot of land, inhabited by people tending their garden; to my right, another plot, cleared but apparently deserted, with a rickety landing stage extending far out into the river. Its sentinel live oak had also fallen – perhaps in the same storm – but into the river, from which its silvery limbs emerged in a graceful final gesture. Further downstream an elderly couple fished from a hut at the end of their landing stage, and after a little while one of them walked back to the house for the Sunday paper.

Behind me the grove hummed and rustled in the mid-day heat. The twin processes of luxuriant growth and rapid decay, silent and invisible to mortal senses, continued universally.

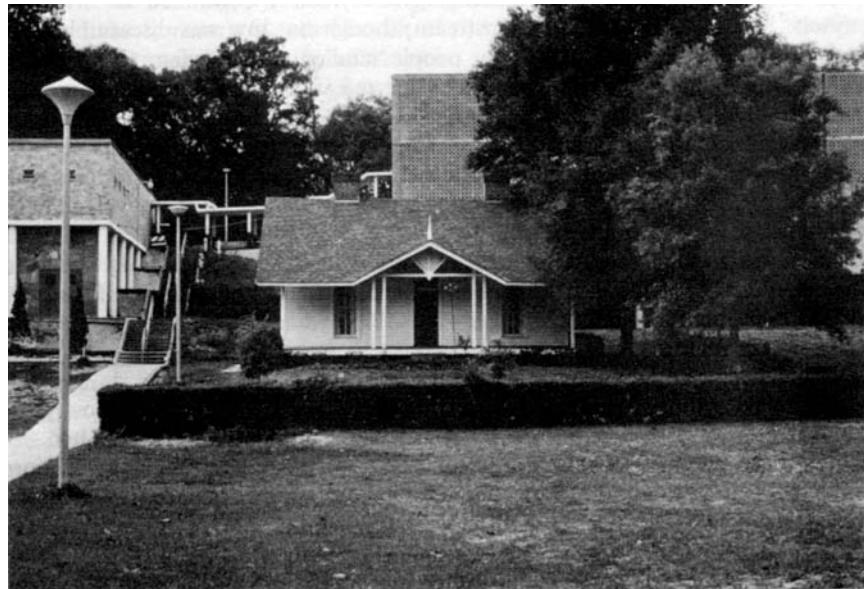
'Delius House' and Jacksonville University

When the young Rudolf Haym arrived at Solana Grove in 1912 to try his hand at orange growing he found Delius's house in a poor state. He had the floors and roof replaced, and moved in. In a few months he, like others before and after, despaired of making a success of the grove and left for the more certain climate of Tampa Bay on the west coast of the State. The house resisted decay and vandalism (perhaps saved from collapse by the brickwork of its two chimneys) until 1939 when it was rediscovered by the good Mrs. Henry Richmond of Jacksonville. Covering the holes in the roof allowed the house to survive until 1961, when it was moved the 35 miles north to Jacksonville.

'Delius House', as the little building is now known, is situated on the campus of Jacksonville University, behind the Phillips Fine Arts Building (which houses the Music Faculty) and the Swisher Gymnasium. Some attempt has been made to landscape the terrain but the house is quite swamped by the modern architecture about it. It has been found, saved and restored, which is marvellous; a few more years of the natural processes of decay - which have almost destroyed the huge live oak in less than twenty years - and it could have been lost forever. But there can be few who could place a hand on the heart and declare that it is now appropriately located. I found the parallel with the reinterment of Delius's body in England quite inescapable: again, a dubiously wise decision arrived at for admirable reasons.

I was kindly received in the Music Faculty by Dr. James Hoffren, who detailed two of his students to show me round Delius House. The Universities of Florida breed a race of super-people, obsessed by physical culture and nurtured by an ideal climate and a diet of steak and fresh fruit. My guides, fine physical specimens, were not born when the house was moved, and had some difficulty in finding it. They were in some awe of the stranger with the peculiar accent who took so long to see over the tiny building (which any competent Estate Agent could summarise in seconds!).

The house looks almost new. This is a tribute to the restoration and an authentic feature - for it was virtually new when Delius arrived in Florida in 1884. It has four rooms and an unbelievable number of internal doors. Each room has a fireplace. Fires were necessary; even before the big freeze of 1886,



The 'Delius House' on the campus of Jacksonville University. (Photo: Roger Buckley)

which halted commercial citrus growing in northern Florida, the winters were cold. Large windows and plastered walls ensure a light, airy aspect in the small rooms, and outside the verandahs, front and back, are sheltered by a generous roof. In one of the front rooms stands a large square piano, reputed to be that used by Delius at Solana Grove after the meeting with Thomas Ward: it was discovered in Daytona Beach – not far down the coast – in 1961. It has a full compass keyboard and casework of restrained ornateness; it is not in playing condition. I could not read the maker's name. In the adjacent room stands another similar instrument by Chickering. Apart from the two pianos, the house is simply furnished.

Gazing through the windows on to smooth turf, I attempted the mental conjuring trick of placing the house back in the grove which I had recently left. Sadly I admit that I failed.

On leaving the house I was introduced to Mr. Thomas Gunn, Director of the Swisher Library, who took me first to the library where the most precious Delius exhibits are usually displayed. The score of *Koanga* was away for restoration – apparently Delius's pasted additions have caused staining of the pages. The Florida Notebook was also receiving attention. Eric Fenby's manuscript of *A Song of Summer* (presented in 1978) was however on display. Mr. Gunn then showed me the small collection of books, records and programmes which is not on permanent display. The most interesting items were those which had belonged to Delius: the volume of Byron given him by Thomas Ward and presented by Eric Fenby in 1962; Berlioz's treatise on orchestration; and Book 5 of Bach's organ works in a suspiciously fresh state of preservation. If this was Delius's copy (which it would be churlish to doubt) can he have opened it very many times?

I was puzzled by another item: *The Castle on the Hill* (1942) by Elizabeth Goudge. On returning home I looked out the work. There is not much of relevance to Delius. A character named Jo Isaacson, a street fiddler, is made to say: "It's not my usual habit to commit sacrilege by playing Delius in these streets."

So ended my visit to Jacksonville University, where I had been made to feel welcome. There was no time for me to visit the Haydon Burns Public Library, the Cummer Gallery of Art, or other centres of interest, as I had now to drive almost the entire length of the State to my final destination.

Travelogue

Having found Solana Grove on my own I can perhaps direct prospective visitors a little. Tough clothes and strong shoes are indicated. The grove lies on the east bank of the St. Johns River; its entrance, marked by a sign placed by Jacksonville University, is on the west side of State Road 13, 30 miles south of the junction of that road with Interstate 295. This point is a short distance beyond Picolata. A car can be left by the gate, which is likely to be locked (but is passable on foot). The walk to the grove, along a good track, takes 20 to 25 minutes; even this distance of about a mile can be tiring in tropical heat. At a short distance from the road, on the right, stands a derelict wooden chapel, probably that illustrated by Jahoda in *The Other Florida*. Inside, an upright



The waterfront of Solana Grove seen from a landing stage a little to the north.
(Photo: Roger Buckley)

piano is decaying at a spectacular rate; so is the fabric of the building, and it is probably wise to keep clear of it.

The track, which is fairly straight, passes through a pleasant wooded area. The trees become taller as the road is left behind. Little sunlit rides lead off at intervals. It is tempting to wander along them, but they branch often and it would be easy to become lost. As the river is approached, the track swings abruptly to the left; Solana Grove lies directly ahead, its entrance path in line with the track. Inside the gate the path bends to the right and the clearing, with the trees at the water's edge beyond, is then seen.

Conclusion

As I stood in Delius's grove, various questions formed themselves in my mind. Could this placid lake of a river really be that portrayed in the 12/8 movement of the *Florida Suite*? Could I imagine distant Negro voices, from the plantation or the river steamers, harmonising the *Appalachia* theme? Could I set this little plot of two acres in the context of the original hundred? Where were the 'immense magnolia trees' mentioned in several of the biographies? What caused the music of the last Act of *The Magic Fountain* to permeate my brain that day? And, recurrently, what had been my motive for coming here?

Every pilgrimage is a journey of self-discovery. Perhaps I wished to test my commitment to Delius's art. I had known of the Florida adventure for most of my life; perhaps I sought to compare the crumbled reality (the climate subtly changed, the house gone, the tree fallen, the forest moving in) with the cherished fantasy. Whatever the true motive, this was a pulse-racing experience, intense and memorable; a happy amalgam of the unexpected and the anticipated; and a point of contact with that young and original mind in which the spark of creativity was fanned to flame, nearly a century before, with the help of these same forces of Nature.

Acknowledgements and suggestions for further reading

I gratefully acknowledge the invaluable advice of Dr. Lionel Carley and of Mrs. John W. Donahoo of Jacksonville. It seems right to use Solana rather than the more current Solano for the name of Delius's orange grove. That is what he called it, and it bore this name until 1912 at least. That is also the name of the hero of *The Magic Fountain* in Delius's manuscript.

I derived help from most of the biographical works on Delius but particularly from the publications listed below, and especially from William Randel's excellent account of the American interlude in Delius's life which is reprinted in *A Delius Companion*. To intending visitors to the parts of Florida not patronised by the operators of package tours I cheerfully recommend the works of Gloria Jahoda (now alas deceased). They are written in a racy full-blooded style:

"... a buxom young lady with teased yellow hair by Clairol, not God..." (*The Other Florida*); (of Delius) "He flailed his arms until he had gotten the brasses pitched to a blare." (*The Road to Samarkand*); and cannot be relied upon for factual accuracy. For the latter shortcoming they have tended to be overlooked. But *The Other Florida* in particular paints a useful background to north and west Florida, its peoples and natural history.

Beecham, T.	:	<i>Frederick Delius</i> (Hutchinson, 1959)
Carley, L. and Threlfall, R	:	<i>Delius and America</i> (Catalogue of the Camden Festival Exhibition, Delius Society, May 1972)
Fenby, E.	:	<i>Delius</i> (The Great Composers Series, Faber and Faber, 1971)
Haym, R.	:	Text of a lecture to the Delius Society given on 4th November 1971 (<i>Delius Society Newsletter</i> No. 33, Winter 1972)
Jahoda, G.	:	'The Music Maker of Solano Grove', in <i>The Other Florida</i> (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1967)
Jahoda, G.	:	<i>The Road to Samarkand (Frederick Delius and His Music)</i> (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1969)
Randel, W.	:	'Delius in America', in <i>A Delius Companion</i> , ed. C. Redwood (Calder, 1976)
Warlock, P.	:	<i>Frederick Delius</i> (The Bodley Head, rev. edition 1952)

BEECHAM REMEMBERED

The entertainment that followed the Society's annual dinner this year on June 12 took the form of a symposium on Sir Thomas Beecham. Lyndon Jenkins ably chaired a distinguished panel consisting of Dr Fenby, Lord Boothby and Felix Aprahamian, each of whom had for a number of years shared a special relationship with Sir Thomas and was therefore able to speak with particular authority. There were some equally distinguished guests in the audience: Sir Adrian (Sir Thomas's elder son) and Lady Beecham, Shirley Lady Beecham, Lady Boothby and Major Norman Millar, all of whom had joined us for dinner. Another of our vice-presidents, Sir Charles Groves, at the time in New Zealand, was unable to join the panel but he had kindly sent his greetings and best wishes for the evening.

If the term 'entertainment' might at first sight seem to savour too much of amusement when dealing with so important a subject, this inescapably was the mood set at once by the recording which initiated the proceedings: a 1952 Boston interview with Sir Thomas in which the sobriety of its title, 'The State of Music in Britain to-day', was considerably lightened by both the naivety of the interviewer and her subject's sharp responses. A little of its flavour may be conveyed by the following extracts:

- Q. I would imagine then that the BBC has had quite an important contribution to make to making the people of Britain more music minded?
- A. Well, that is what they claim . . .
- Q. Would you say that American composers have had much influence on British compo—
- A. NONE WHATSOEVER!
- Q. Might I ask you, of those many British people who are writing music now, who would you say shows the most promise of the younger—
- A. Every British composer in the last two hundred years has been promising!
- Q. Whom would you name as the three outstanding composers in Britain of this century?
- A. Oh, that is very simple — Delius, Elgar and Vaughan Williams. Those are by far and away the outstanding — and the *only* outstanding — composers. . .
- Q. And probably of the three of them, Vaughan Williams has had the most recognition?
- A. I don't think so.
- Q. Well, who would you say?
- A. Undoubtedly Frederick Delius.
- Q. But did Delius have the recognition during his life-time?
- A. Oh, most certainly. He was played everywhere. As far back as 1929 I gave a festival — a whole week — six concerts — the greatest musical event known in England in the last fifty years. He was brought over, crippled, paralysed and blind, and the whole town rose to greet him and *thronged* the concert halls. What more could you want? It was like the return of Voltaire to Paris in 1778.

A year or two ago I recorded for Victor an album of Frederick Delius, three works, including the Pianoforte Concerto . . . In the same year I produced albums of Mozart – symphonies and concertos (which Mr Heifetz played) – Richard Strauss, and others. The sale of the Delius album was more than twice as large as any classical composer.

Q. Is that right?
 A. That seems to signify recognition on the part of somebody!
 Q. It certainly does . . .

In the ensuing discussion the panel agreed that Beecham had probably been quite sincere in electing those particular 'three outstanding composers'. Asked what Sir Thomas might have excelled at had he not chosen to be a musician, Lord Boothby suggested that he would have made a good politician or a man of business (which, he added, 'in practice he was not!'). Some thought was then given to Beecham's very extensive repertoire, with particular reference to those composers and works he seldom if ever programmed. Felix Aprahamian thought the omission of Ravel curious considering how marvellous a conductor of Debussy he had been. The fourth symphonies of Brahms and Schumann were offered as other 'gaps'.

Eric Fenby commented on Beecham's consummate gift of sizing up an unfamiliar score almost immediately. He remembered an occasion, after Delius had died and he was working for a while as a kind of secretary to Sir Thomas, early one morning receiving a telephone message to collect the score of Prokofiev's First Violin Concerto which Sir Thomas was to record later that day (August 1935). On arrival he found Beecham still in pyjamas, smoking the habitual cigar, and he gave the score merely a glance. A taxi took them to the Abbey Road studios, Fenby all the while carrying the score. Once on the podium, though, and with the score open before him, it was quite incredible how he got to the heart of that Concerto.

He also recalled how in 1929 Beecham used to come over to Grez from his hotel in Fontainebleau, have lunch, and then proceed to play at the keyboard ('frankly, I thought, very badly') from the Delius vocal scores, calling out from memory all the orchestration . . . 'and I can't remember a single occasion on which I had to correct him, he seemed to have the whole thing marvellously clear in his mind'. Another recollection concerned Elgar, who, shortly before his death, wrote to Sir Thomas saying that the one thing that would give him more pleasure than anything else would be if he were to record his *Falstaff*. Had that been committed to disc, what an interpretation to treasure it might have been.

With contributions from the audience, the many probing questions and delightful reminiscences could clearly have continued had the time at our disposal permitted it. One would even have liked to follow up other certain fascinating comments dropped by the way, such as for example when Lord Boothby mentioned knowing Kern and Gershwin as a boy in America. But it was a parting remark from Lord Boothby to the chairman that admirably summed up the evening: 'Of course,' he said, on the way down the stairs, 'Thomas was the star of the evening.'

‘EINE MESSE DES LEBENS’ IN LUCERNE

August 18th 1982

Right in the heart of Switzerland lies the cantonal city of Lucerne, an attractive town, prosperous and sure of itself; a beautiful setting, and a beautiful day, for a performance of this exaltation of Life and the Will!

What sort of performance of the *Mass* should one expect from two Swiss soloists out of four, a Swiss choir and a Swiss orchestra, basically a pick-up orchestra that exists only for the three weeks of the Lucerne Festival and is made up of musicians from orchestras from all parts of Switzerland (I spotted several players from the Geneva-based *Orchestre de la Suisse Romande*, and there may have been others)? Few of these musicians are steeped in Delian lore, and the huge score must have been unfamiliar to them. And yet out of this heterogeneous assembly Sir Charles Groves, who clearly believes in ‘keeping the music moving’, drew a performance (a Swiss première, incidentally) that reflected great credit on all concerned. With such a vast and unfamiliar work there were, of course, some lapses. The magic moments of the ‘*Nachtlied*’ went for nothing, for instance, and there were a few unnerving seconds towards the end of the first ‘*Tanzlied*’ when contralto, choir and orchestra got out of step and produced some harmonies unknown even to Delius before Sir Charles brought everybody back into line. And yet, as I listen again to my tape of the performance, broadcast all over Switzerland on all three linguistic networks and recorded for me by my wife in my absence in Lucerne, I remember the many spine-tingling moments: the great choral passages, the beautiful woodwind and horn solos, the Swiss singers Evelyne Brunner and Nicole Buloze, the clear, poetic tenor of Ian Caley (a memorable Albert Herring in Geneva in 1981), and the magnificent voice of John Shirley-Quirk, a little faded now, perhaps, but as ever capable of projecting great personal and emotional involvement.

What did the predominantly Swiss audience make of it? Some of them had perhaps seen one of the dozen or so recent performances of *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* in Zurich, and so would be aware of one aspect of Delius’s work; but to the great majority the music was quite new. I think that the five or six minutes of applause at the close testify to the audience’s appreciation of the tremendous effort put into the performance: and, speaking personally, I have so little chance of hearing ‘live’ Delius in Geneva that I do not for one moment regret making the 400-mile trip to Lucerne and back. Let’s hope that all the musicians in that composite orchestra carry the news back to their own orchestras that the discovery of the music of Delius, throughout Switzerland, is long overdue!

R.S. Kirkman



Deeply committed! At the AGM on June 12th 1982 (left to right): Diane Eastwood (Secretary), Gilbert Parfitt (Vice-Chairman), Peter Lyons (Treasurer), Rodney Meadows (Chairman), Estelle Palmley (Membership Secretary) and Lyndon Jenkins

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Sunday November 7th at 3 p.m. Cliffs Pavilion, Southend

Lionel Friend conducts the London Young Sinfonia in Delius's *Idyll* (soloists Jennifer Smith and Alan Opie), Elgar's Cello Concerto (soloist Jane Hyland) and Milner's *The Water and the Fire* with the Southend Festival Chorus.

Tuesday November 16th at 7 p.m. Mary Ward House, St Tavistock Place, London
 Delius Society meeting: an evening with Norman Del Mar. *Please note revised date.*

Saturday November 27th at 2.15 p.m. London Transport Railway Training Centre, Wood Lane, London W12.

British Music Society's AGM, followed at 3 p.m. by Vernon Handley talking on 'Delius - A Conductor's View', and at 4.30 p.m. a showing of Ken Russell's 'Song of Summer'.

Saturday December 4th at 7 p.m. City Hall, Sheffield

Delius's *In a Summer Garden*. Maurice Handford conducts the Hallé Orchestra in a programme that also includes works by Berlioz, Mozart, Schubert and Richard Strauss.

Sunday December 5th at 7.30 p.m. St David's Hall, Cardiff

Dr Fenby conducts the LSO in Delius's *The Walk to the Paradise Garden*, *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*, *Summer Night on the River* and *A Song of Summer*. In the second half, Ivan Fischer conducts Dvorak's Symphony No.8.

Saturday December 11th at 7.30 p.m. Wigmore Hall, London

Delius's Cello Sonata and songs performed by Eilene Hannan (soprano) and members of the Nash Ensemble as part of their 'British Series'. Works by Beethoven and Mendelssohn complete the programme. Tickets £1.50 to £3.50. Box Office 01-935 2141.

1983**Tuesday January 11th at 7.30 p.m. Town Hall, Birmingham**

Norman Del Mar conducts the CBSO in Delius's *Dance Rhapsody No.2*, Grieg's Piano Concerto (soloist Philip Fowke) and Elgar's Second Symphony. Tickets £1.70 to £5.50. Box Office 021-236 3889.

Tuesday January 25th at 7 p.m. BMIC, 10 Stratford Place, London W1

Delius Society talk: 'Delius and Dowson' presented by Charles Barnard.

Sunday January 30th Philadelphia, USA

Philadelphia Branch's annual Delius birthday programme — a violin recital by Davyd Booth including Delius's 1892 Sonata in B and *Legende* and the US première of Finzi's *Elegy*. Venue to be announced.

Friday February 11th at 7 p.m. Mary Ward House, 5 Tavistock Place, London

Delius Society talk: 'Delius — A Conductor's View' presented by Vernon Handley.

March 3rd — 5th Jacksonville, Florida 23rd Annual Delius Festival

Thursday March 3rd: Delius Composition Competition concert (to include Delius/Fenby organ arrangements while the judges are deliberating) and a lecture by Dr Fenby.

Friday March 4th: recital given by Jacksonville University artists in a programme of works by Delius, Debussy and Grieg.

Saturday March 5th: an afternoon showing of 'Song of Farewell' and an evening concert in the second half of which Dr Fenby will conduct the Jacksonville University Orchestra and Chorus in *A Late Lark*, *Fantastic Dance* and *Songs of Farewell*.

Further details of Delius Society events may be obtained from the Programme Secretary, Derek Cox: 0444-83294.

